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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 9793
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PHUM](#) [UNGA](#) [UNSC](#) [VE](#) [PE](#)
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ' CHARGE OF FRAUD FURTHER STRAINS
PERU-VENEZUELA RELATIONS

Classified By: POL Alexis Ludwig for Reasons 1.4 (c,d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez' public allegation that Alan Garcia won Peru's recent elections by resorting to fraud has generated strong public and official repudiations here. This latest exchange has further strained an already testy bilateral relationship, and with luck will complicate Venezuela's bid for a temporary seat on the UN Security Council. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Peruvian government officials have reacted strongly to Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez' public allegation that President Alan Garcia stole the recent election victory from radical presidential candidate and Chavez ally Ollanta Humala by resorting to "fraud." In an impromptu September 25 television interview that received heavy prime-time news play, Prime Minister Jorge del Castillo replied archly, exclaiming that Chavez had no business presuming to teach Peruvians about democracy. Del Castillo added that Venezuela was headed toward "the highest stage of authoritarianism" with his rubber stamp congress peopled entirely of Chavez' supporters and no opposition of any kind. Foreign Minister Garcia Belaunde was also quoted in news reports as being dismayed by the Venezuelan's comment.

¶3. (SBU) Other prominent political figures have joined the fray, which has exacerbated the strains in an already testy relationship and hardened anti-Chavez sentiment among a broad swath of Peruvians. Foreign Ministry contacts have privately acknowledged that this latest episode could further complicate a bilateral relationship that remains on ice following the electoral victory of Garcia over Humala, but said a formal response through official channels was unlikely because it would only dignify a comment that "lacked seriousness."

¶4. (C) Comment: Since his election, Garcia has followed a three-pronged strategy for dealing with Venezuela. The first element has consisted of efforts to calm the verbal waters and open the door for an eventual normalization of bilateral relations (the two countries maintain Embassies in one another's capital but have withdrawn ambassadors). The second is intensified monitoring of Venezuelan efforts to create Bolivarian circles and support far-left parties in the November regional elections. The third prong consists of efforts to build a coalition of like-minded Pacific coast states in South and Central America that can push back on Chavez's regional influence. Garcia's courtship of Chile

and the integration of Santiago into the Andean Community fit into that plan. Chavez has consistently refused to play along with the first element of the Peruvian strategy, continuing to act as though Peruvian objections to his interference in the recent Presidential elections are an undiplomatic affront to Caracas. We can only hope that stoking this controversy so close the UN General Assembly vote on Venezuela,s bid for a Security Council seat will tarnish Caracas, prospects within the region. End Comment.
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